
AP[®] World History: Modern

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

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Long Essay Question 4

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Question 4: Long Essay Question, Nationalism and Global Conflicts

6 points

General Scoring Notes

- Except where otherwise noted, each point of these rubrics is earned independently; for example, a student could earn a point for evidence without earning a point for thesis/claim.
- **Accuracy:** The components of these rubrics require that students demonstrate historically defensible content knowledge. Given the timed nature of the exam, essays may contain errors that do not detract from their overall quality, as long as the historical content used to advance the argument is accurate.
- **Clarity:** Exam essays should be considered first drafts and thus may contain grammatical errors. Those errors will not be counted against a student unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge, skills, and practices described below.

During the twentieth century, competing political and economic interests along with intense nationalism contributed to global conflicts.

Develop an argument that evaluates the extent to which nationalism was the most important factor contributing to global conflict during this period.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis/Claim (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that do not earn this point: - Are not historically defensible. - Only restate or rephrase the prompt. - Do not respond to the prompt. - Do not establish a line of reasoning. - Are overgeneralized.	Responses that earn this point: Provide a historically defensible thesis or claim about the extent to which nationalism was the most important factor contributing to global conflict during the twentieth century. The thesis or claim must either provide some indication of the reason for making that claim OR establish categories of the argument.
	Examples that do not earn this point: Provide a restatement of the prompt <i>“Nationalism was the key factor that led to global conflict in the twentieth century.”</i> Provide a historically defensible claim, but do not establish a line of reasoning <i>“Communism and capitalism were opposed to each other.”</i> Provide a claim that is not historically defensible <i>“State competition due to mercantilist ideas drove most conflicts in the twentieth century.”</i>	Examples that earn this point: Establish a line of reasoning that evaluates the topic of the prompt <i>“While rival ideologies and alliances were big factors in various global conflicts, nationalism was the main culprit for the First World War and the Second World War, as demonstrated by the genocides present in both wars.”</i> Establish a line of reasoning that evaluates the topic of the prompt with analytic categories <i>“While nationalism was certainly an important factor in the global conflicts of the twentieth century, nationalism should be viewed as one of the ideologies causing these conflicts along with communism, fascism, and even some religions.”</i> Establish a line of reasoning <i>“The intense German nationalism of the Nazis was the biggest factor leading to World War II.”</i> [Minimally acceptable thesis/claim]
	Additional Notes: - The thesis or claim must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion (which may not be limited to the first or last paragraphs). - The thesis or claim must identify a relevant development(s) in the period, although it is not required to encompass the entire period.	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row B Contextualization	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Describes a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.
(0–1 points)	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: - Provide an overgeneralized statement about the time period referenced in the prompt. - Provide context that is not relevant to the prompt. - Provide a passing phrase or reference. Examples that do not earn this point: Do not provide context relevant to the topic of the prompt <i>“The expansion of competing land empires like the Ottoman and Safavid led to armed conflicts.”</i> Provide a passing phrase or reference <i>“Social Darwinism was an important ideology.”</i>	Responses that earn this point: - Accurately describe a context relevant to nationalism or global conflict during the twentieth century. Examples of relevant context that earn this point include the following, if appropriate elaboration is provided: - Growth of modern anti-Semitism, Social Darwinism, and other racial theories - Rise of nationalism and nationalist revolutions in 19th century - Establishment of new nation-states - Enlightenment ideas of liberalism, democracy, independence - Socialism, communism - Fascism, National Socialism - Atlantic Revolutions - Breakdown of multinational empires - Industrialization, global capitalism - Pre-WWI European alliance system 19th century imperialism by European States, U.S., and Japan - World Wars—campaigns, total war, treatment of civilians, peace agreements - Challenges to existing social and political order, including revolutions - Cold War alliance systems, Non-Aligned Movement - Decolonization/colonial independence movements Example of acceptable contextualization: <i>“Social Darwinist ideas of race and competition grew steadily in the late 19th century and became intertwined with nationalism.”</i> <i>“19th-century nationalist movements had led to the creation of new nation-states.”</i> [Minimally acceptable contextualization]
	Additional Notes: - The response must describe broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question that are relevant to the topic of the prompt. - To earn this point, the context provided must be more than a phrase or reference.	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
Row C Evidence (0–2 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Provides specific examples of at least two pieces of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt.	2 points Supports an argument in response to the prompt using at least two pieces of specific and relevant evidence.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that do not earn points: - Identify a single piece of evidence. - Provide evidence that is not relevant to the topic of the prompt. - Provide evidence that is outside the time period or region specified in the prompt. - Repeat information that is specified in the prompt. Examples that do not earn points: Provide evidence that is outside the time period <i>“States fought conflicts around the globe as they sponsored empires that aimed to spread Christianity and convert indigenous peoples.”</i>	Responses that earn 1 point: - Identify at least two specific historical examples relevant to nationalism or global conflict during the twentieth century. Examples of evidence that are specific and relevant include the following (two examples required): - Ethnic violence during the World Wars - The Armenian Genocide - Partition of India - Pre-WWI European Alliance system - The Holocaust - Fascism, National Socialism - Communism - Liberalism, democracy - Authoritarianism - Japanese colonialism - Decolonization/colonial independence movements, including Vietnam, Algeria, India, Kenya - NATO, Warsaw Pact, Non-Aligned Movement - Cold War proxy wars, including Korea, Vietnam, Angola - Industrialized modern warfare, including strategic bombing of civilians - Global capitalism and competition for raw materials, markets Example of a statement that earns one point for evidence: <i>“The Vietnamese nationalist independence movement initially fought for independence from France and subsequently divided into communist and anti-communist groups led by Ho Chi Minh and the South Vietnamese military leadership based in Saigon, respectively.”</i>	Responses that earn 2 points: - Use at least two specific historical examples to support an argument regarding the extent to which nationalism was the most important factor contributing to global conflict during the twentieth century. Examples that successfully support an argument with evidence: <i>“The Armenian genocide by the Ottoman Empire in World War I and the Holocaust by Nazi Germany in World War II are both examples of states being motivated by a xenophobic nationalism as part of global conflict.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about nationalism motivating mass killings during war] <i>“The Korean War and the three-way Angolan war of independence both show that Cold War ideologies of communism vs capitalist democracy influenced global conflict just as much as nationalism did.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about ideology also being a factor in global conflict]

	Additional Notes: • Typically, statements credited as evidence will be more specific than statements credited as contextualization. • If a response has a multipart argument, then it can meet the threshold of two pieces of evidence by giving one example for one part of the argument and another example for a different part of the argument, but the total number of examples must still be at least two.
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Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
Row D Analysis and Reasoning Complex Understanding	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Uses historical reasoning [e.g., comparison, causation, continuity and change] to frame or structure an argument that addresses the prompt.	2 points Demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt through sophisticated argumentation and/or effective use of evidence.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
(0–2 points)	Responses that do not earn points: - May include evidence but offer no reasoning to connect the evidence to an argument. - May assert the use of historical reasoning but does not use it to frame or structure an argument.	Responses that earn 1 point: Must demonstrate the use of historical reasoning to frame or structure an argument about the extent to which nationalism was the most important factor contributing to global conflict during the twentieth century. The reasoning might be uneven or imbalanced, or the evidence may be overly general or lacking specificity.	Responses that earn 2 points: May demonstrate a complex understanding through sophisticated argumentation that is relevant to the prompt. This may be done in a variety of ways, such as: - Explaining multiple themes or perspectives to explore complexity or nuance; OR - Explaining multiple causes or effects, multiple similarities or differences, or multiple continuities or changes; OR - Explaining both cause and effect, both similarity and difference, or both continuity and change; OR - Explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods or geographical areas. These connections should clearly relate to an argument that responds to the prompt. May demonstrate a complex understanding through effective use of evidence relevant to an argument that addresses the prompt. This may be done in a variety of ways that might include: - Explaining how multiple pieces of specific and relevant evidence [at least four] support a nuanced or complex argument that responds to the prompt; OR - Using evidence effectively to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of different perspectives relevant to the prompt.

	Examples that do not earn points: Provide evidence but offer no reasoning to connect the evidence to an argument • <i>“The Viet Minh was a communist and nationalist group that fought in Vietnam.”</i>	Using a historical reasoning process to frame or structure an argument could include: • Explaining that European states, the U.S., and Japan all expanded their empires in the first half of the 20th century, and colonized peoples later embraced nationalism to mobilize revolutions against imperial rule. • Explaining the ultra-nationalist ideas of fascist movements in Italy and Germany that prompted aggression, colonization, and eventually World War II. Example of acceptable use of historical reasoning: • <i>“Fascism was ultra-nationalist, expansionist, and viewed war as a positive good, all of which drove Nazi Germany to annex and conquer territories in Europe, starting World War II.”</i> [Indicates a cause/effect related to nationalism and global conflict]	Demonstrating a complex understanding might include any of the following, if appropriate elaboration is provided: • Explaining that both fascist Italy under Mussolini and Nazi Germany under Hitler were ultra-nationalist which motivated German aggressive expansion and Italy’s imperial ambitions, while the Soviet Union was primarily motivated by a desire to spread communist ideology, yet it appealed to nationalism during World War II mobilization. [Explains similarities and differences] • Explaining how the sense of nationalism that motivated soldiers in World War I to keep fighting for their countries despite the heavy casualties of trench warfare was similar to the sense of patriotism that drove earlier conflicts [for example the French Revolutionary wars or the Italian or German wars of unification in the nineteenth century], but also noting that there were differences because some of the combatants in World War I also used colonial troops from their overseas empires, who were motivated by different considerations and loyalties. [Explains relevant and insightful connections between time periods] • Explaining how nationalism was a factor in several causes of World War I, including its role in militarism and territorial ambitions among European leaders; motivating Serbian nationalists to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which triggered the war; and in fueling public support for the war. [Explaining multiple themes or perspectives]
	Additional Notes: • To earn the first point for analysis and reasoning, the response must use historical reasoning to structure a response to the prompt, although the reasoning might be uneven or imbalanced, or the evidence may be overly general or lacking in specificity. • This complex understanding must be part of the argument and may be demonstrated in any part of the response. • While it is not necessary for this complex understanding to be woven throughout the response, it must be more than merely a phrase or reference.		

The twentieth century was an epoch defined by global conflicts of unprecedented scale, driven by a brew of competing political and economic interests, and supercharged by intense nationalism. While multifaceted forces undoubtedly contributed to these conflicts, an evaluation reveals that nationalism, with its power to mobilize populations, justify aggression and define zero-sum game mentalities, often served as the most potent and fundamental ideological driver. It provided the popular fervor and moral justification necessary for states to pursue aggressive political aims and compete for economic dominance, transforming latent rivalries into devastating wars.

The broader historical context for this period involves the maturation of the nation-state system in the 19th century, where national identity became increasingly central to political legitimacy and popular consciousness. This was compounded by industrialization, which fueled economic competition for resources and markets, leading to imperialism. Nationalism provided the ideological superstructure for these ambitions, framing colonial expansion not merely as economic necessity but as a matter of national pride and mission. This environment, saturated with nationalistic sentiment, created a fertile ground for conflict, where diplomatic incidents could rapidly escalate due to inflamed public opinion and the perceived imperatives of national honor.

The Great War stands as a stark example of nationalism's primacy. While imperial rivalries (naval race between Britain and Germany), economic competition, and rigid alliance systems were crucial, it was aggressive nationalism that lit the fuse and fanned the flames. Pan-Slavism fueled Serbian ambitions and Russian support, clashing with Austro-Hungarian desires to maintain its multi-ethnic empire. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Serbian nationalist was the spark, but the ensuing crisis was escalated by deeply ingrained nationalistic sentiments in Germany, France, and Britain, each believing in their nation's superiority and righteous cause. Nationalism mobilized millions to enlist, enduring horrific conditions out of duty to their country, demonstrating its unparalleled power to command sacrifice. This pattern intensified and evolved in the lead-up to World War II. The very peace settlement of World War I, the Treaty of Versailles, sowed seeds of future conflict by imposing harsh terms on Germany, which were expertly exploited by Adolf Hitler. Nazi ideology was an extreme form of racial nationalism, positing Aryan supremacy and the need for "living space." Similarly, Japanese ultranationalism, embodied in the concept of the Great East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, sought to expell Western colonial powers and establish Japanese hegemony, driven by a belief in Japanese racial and cultural superiority and the economic imperative for resources. While economic depression and political ambitions were key, it was the virulent nationalism of these regimes that ideologically justified unparalleled aggression and atrocities, from the Holocaust to the Rape of Nanking. Other examples, such as nationalist fervor during colonial wars of independence or ethnic conflicts following the collapse of multi-national states like Yugoslavia, further underscore nationalism's enduring and destructive capability.

In conclusion, while economic interests provided the material goals and political ambitions the strategic direction, nationalism was the most critical factor in translating these into widespread, popular, and devastating global conflict during the twentieth century. It acted as the ideological engine, providing the justification, motivation, and popular mobilization that enabled states to pursue aggressive policies and engage in total war. Its ability to define enemies, demand loyalty, and sanctify violence made it an exceptionally powerful, and often the most decisive, force in shaping the century's cataclysmic conflicts.

During the twentieth century, nationalism played a vital role in contributing to global conflict during this period. Nationalism contributed to wars such as the Korean war which caused the separation of south Korea and North Korea, due to conflicting ideologies. Moreover it played a vital role in the beginning of the second world war as it was one of the main reasons for Germany's participation. During the Korean war, nations such as the US, and Russia had already indulged in Nationalism, and moved their ideas to other places such as Korea. A capitalist south Korea and communist north were being controlled by two global superpowers. Due to this many people died and completely altered the map by dividing the nation into two. This could also be given reason to the Cold War which was incredibly influenced by Nationalism as well.

After world war 1, the treaty of Versailles left Germany in extreme poverty. Many felt humiliated by the defeat and were susceptible to nationalism. Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany promised a return to a time when Germany was important, when Germany was more than a joke to the world. This gave rise to a nationalist Nazi movement which hoped to purify the world and create a 'master race'. World war two could be considered one of the most important wars in the twentieth century, and played a pivotal role in how the world is shaped today. This change in thinking to a nationalist ideology is the reason why Nazi Germany persisted, and had such tremendous support within the nation.

Although some may argue that nationalism was only a sub effect of a changing market and mobilization becoming more common, yet it proves to be the reason for these changes and the root cause of the problem. Because national identity became such a huge part of a nation, to the point many were willing to risk their life in war, it serves to show the extent to which nationalism impacted the globe. Likewise, they influenced political interests by creating alliances with other states who shared the same thought, impacting economic interests.

For many reasons it could be seen that nationalism was the puppeteer for intense global conflicts around the world in the 20th century, from its presence in shaping world war two and the social alliances of current day, to the eradication of millions of people, nationalism is the driving force of global conflict. Without a change to nationalism, wars such as world war two and the Korean war would not be seen.

In the early twentieth century WWI had begun causing mass destruction to the environment in Europe and fragmenting countries into a bunch of little states. After this fragmentation Nationalism had swept some of these rising little states leading to most states wanting to gain independence over their country and declaring independence to be their own state. While other ideologies such as Communism and Capitalism were important factors in contributing to global conflict in the twentieth century, Nationalism was the most important factor contributing to global conflict in the twentieth century because it caused a lot of problems during the Cold War such as the need to influence these new states and the wars fought to influence the new states.

Long Essay Question 4

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses* on [AP Central](#).

Sample: 4A

Thesis Score: 1

Contextualization Score: 1

Evidence Score: 2

Analysis and Reasoning Score: 2

Total Score: 6

Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for thesis. The response makes a historically defensible claim that nationalism was used to justify and create popular support for conflict. In the first paragraph, the response states, “nationalism, with its power to mobilize populatoins, justify aggression and define zero-sum game mentalities, often served as the most potent and fundamental ideological driver. It provided the popular fervor and moral justification necessary for states to pursue aggressive political aims and compete for economic dominance, transforming latent rivalries into devastating wars.”

Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualization. In the second paragraph, the response discusses the development of nation states, industrialization, economic competition, and imperialism. The response states, “The broader historical context for this period involves the maturation of the nation-state system in the 19th century, where national identity became increasingly central to political legitimacy and popular conciousness. This was compounded by indsutrialization, which fueled economic competition for resources and markets, leading to imperialism.”

Evidence (0–2 points): 2

The response earned 1 point for using evidence. The response provides multiple pieces of accurate evidence relevant to nationalism being the driving force in 20th century conflicts, including Pan-Slavism, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the mobilization of millions of soldiers for war, Nazi racial nationalism, “living space” for Germans, Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, The Holocaust, colonial wars of independence, and ethnic conflicts following the collapse of multi-national states like Yugoslavia.

The response earned 1 point for supporting an argument with evidence. The response supports the argument in the third paragraph that “aggressive nationalism ... lit the fuse and fanned the flames” that led to the Great War, with one piece of evidence stating, “Pan-Slavism fueled Serbian ambitions” and that the “assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Serbian nationalist was the spark.” In the same paragraph, the response supports the argument that “the Treaty of Versailles, sowed seeds of future conflict by imposing harsh terms on Germany,” with evidence that this was exploited by Hitler and used to underscore “Aryan supremacy and the need for ‘living space.’”

Long Essay Question 4 (continued)**Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 2**

The response earned 1 point for historical reasoning. The response uses the reasoning skill of causation by explaining how alliances and “ingrained nationalistic sentiments in Germany, France, and Britain” led to total war in Europe. The response also uses the reasoning skill of comparison by explaining how “Japanese ultranationalism” was similar to what the Nazis did with the belief of “Aryan supremacy.” The response states the concept of “the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, sought to expell Western colonial powers and establish Japanese hegemony, driven by a belief in Japanese racial and cultural superiority and the economic impertive for resources.”

The response earned 1 point for complex understanding. The response explains how multiple pieces of specific and relevant evidence support a nuanced or complex argument that responds to the prompt in its discussion of factors leading to the Great War and World War II. It also uses evidence effectively to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of different perspectives relevant to the prompt by recognizing that, “While economic depression and political ambitions were key, it was the virulent nationalism of these regimes that ideologically justified unparalleled aggression and atrocities.”

Sample:4B**Thesis Score: 1****Contextualization Score: 0****Evidence Score: 2****Analysis and Reasoning Score: 1****Total Score: 4****Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1**

The response earned 1 point for thesis. The response makes a historically defensible claim related to how nationalism contributed to World War II and the Korean War. In the first paragraph the response states, “Nationalism contributed to wars such as the Korean war which caused the seperation of south korea and North Korea, due to conflicting ideoligies. Moreover it played a vital role in the begining of the second world war as it it was one of the main reasons for Germanys participation.”

Contextualization (0–1 points): 0

The response did not earn the point for contextualization. The response did not describe a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.

Evidence (0–2 points): 2

The response earned 1 point for using evidence. The response includes multiple pieces of accurate evidence relevant to nationalism and global conflict, including capitalist and communist competition in Korea and “a nationalist Nazi movement.”

The response earned 1 point for supporting an argument with evidence. The response supports the argument that, “nationalist ideology is the reason why Nazi Germany persisted, and had such tremendous support within the nation,” with evidence that “Hitler, the leader of Nazi germany promised a return to a time when Germany was important,” and “This gave rise to a nationalist Nazi movement which hoped to purify the world and create a ‘master race.’”

Long Essay Question 4 (continued)**Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 1**

The response earned 1 point for historical reasoning. The response discusses the causal relationship between the effects of World War I on the German population by stating, “After world war 1, the treaty of versailles left germany in extreme poverty. Many felt humilliated by the defeat and were suseptible to nationalism.”

The response did not earn the point for complex understanding. There was no attempt to demonstrate a complex understanding of how nationalism was the most important factor contributing to global conflict during this period.

Sample: 4C**Thesis Score: 1****Contextualization Score: 0****Evidence Score: 0****Analysis and Reasoning Score: 0****Total Score: 1****Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1**

The response earned 1 point for thesis. The response makes a historically defensible claim in the first paragraph about the importance of nationalism in Cold War conflicts. The response states, “Nationalism was the most important factor contributing to global conflict in the twentieth century because it caused a lot of problems during the Cold War such as the need to influence these new states and the wars fought to influence the new states.”

Contextualization (0–1 points): 0

The response did not earn the point for contextualization. An attempt is made in the first paragraph that identifies a period of time after World War I, but it was not clear in describing which states became independent or wished to be independent during this time period.

Evidence (0–2 points): 0

The response did not earn the point for using evidence. The response does not provide any specific evidence outside of the thesis statement that is relevant to nationalism or global conflict.

The response did not earn the point for supporting an argument with evidence. The response did not attempt to identify or support an argument that is relevant to nationalism or global conflict.

Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 0

The response did not earn the point for historical reasoning. The response does not use comparison, causation, or continuity and change to frame or structure an argument.

The response did not earn the point for complex understanding. The response does not attempt to demonstrate a complex understanding of how nationalism led to global conflict in the twentieth century.